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FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
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INFO GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 001237

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [KPAL](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN DIASPORA IN QATAR: C-NE6-00547

REF: STATE 113998

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Embassy officer spoke to several Palestinian private-sector businessmen on issues facing the community in Qatar. They viewed the election of Hamas as a protest vote but believed Hamas should have been given a better chance to govern and through governance, adapt to the reality of the peace process. There are no clear views on Hamass entry into the PLO, although Palestinians in Qatar tend to favor Fatah and its views. The voting mechanism for the PLO is not clear among the Palstinian diaspora here. End Summary.

Hamass Election Victory

12. (C) Paletinians in Qatar felt that prior to the election f Hamas the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) had made many concessions to the Israelis in the past several years and got nothing in return. The Israelis continued military interventions and killings, rejected the Road Map, and withdrew from Gaza without P.A. cooperation, contacts said. Palestinian negotiators were not taken seriously and the people felt "depressed." Thus the vote for Hamas was a vote to end futile compromises.

13. (C) Palestinian and Arab contacts told us after the election that Hamas had come to power through the ballot box as the West wanted. The U.S. should accept the results and give Hamas time to adapt as it grapples with the responsibility of government.

14. (C) Palestinians seem to be somewhat less concerned than their Qatari hosts about the spread of Islamic parties in the region because such a phenomenon would be viewed in relation to the accumulated sufferings of the Palestinian people.

Fatah Stronger in Qatar

15. (C) Hamas does not have a major base of support in Qatar, despite the fact that Khalid Meshaal resided in Doha in the late 1990s. Hamas does not have an official office in the country. The majority of Palestinians in Doha support or have connections to the Fatah movement: P.A. president Mahmoud Abbas lived in Qatar for a long period, where he worked in the Ministry of Education; the current Palestinian Ambassador is a Fatah official. On the other hand, the influential cleric Dr. Yousef al-Qaradawi, a naturalized Qatari and a product of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, has links to Hamas and is defender of Hamas's terrorist actions against Israel.

Religious Views

16. (C) The Palestinian community is diverse in its religious views, but the clear majority favors a moderate and tolerant practice. At the wealthy end of the economic spectrum, some hold liberal and secular views mixed with a European social

attitude. Hard-line Salafi views have penetrated some families in the professional middle classes.

¶17. (C) A majority of the Palestinians in Qatar are from the Gaza Strip -- from families that were outside Gaza at the time of the 1967 war. This region of historic Palestine was more socially conservative than the West Bank. It is some of these families that became increasingly conservative in the 1970s and 1980s. There are between 12,000 and 18,000 Palestinians in Doha, although the number is hard to fix because they hold a variety of passports and travel documents.

PLO and Elections

¶18. (C) The entry of Hamas into the PLO is not a topic that is actively discussed. Of course, Palestinians are aware that entry into the organization would mean that Hamas would have to resolve its positions on Israel and Oslo, but this is treated as an interesting political question rather than something constituents should take sides on.

¶19. (C) The focus of Palestinian political activity is the Palestinian Embassy, which coordinates official visits and organizes community events. The embassy is one of the oldest Palestinian missions.

¶10. (C) Palestinians are generally not aware of plans for a Palestinian National Congress. Recollections of the previous Congress are vague. Control of the PNC/Palestine Liberation Organization is not a "hot topic" among the majority of Palestinians in Doha today, but it could be more current among Hamas supporters. Among all, deteriorating economic, social, and security conditions in the Gaza Strip are issues for discussion.

UNTERMEYER